

## What is a Watershed?

A watershed is the area of land that drains into a body of water. It is separated from other systems by high points in the area such as hills or slopes. It includes not only the waterway itself but also the entire land area that drains to it.

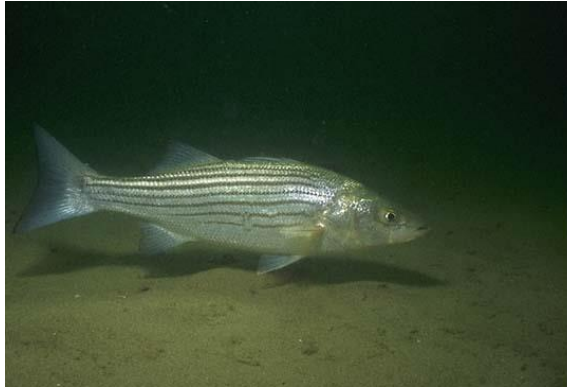
## Why is it important?

Humans have an impact on the watershed in a number of ways. One way people influence watersheds is by changing where stormwater flows. By changing the contour of the land and adding stormwater systems, people change how and where the water goes. The storm drains and catch basins you see along the sidewalks and streets lead to a system of underground pipes that drain directly to local waterways.

Another way people affect a watershed is by adding potential pollution sources to the watershed. The type of pollutant a rain droplet might pick up on its way through a watershed depends in part on how the land it travels through is used. How the land in a watershed is used by people, whether it is farms, houses or shopping centers, has a direct impact on the water quality of the watershed. When it rains, stormwater carries with it the effects of human activities as it drains off the land into the local waterway. As rain washes over a parking lot, it might pick up litter, road salt and motor oil and carry these pollutants to a local stream. On a farm, rain might wash fertilizers and soil into a pond.

Watershed protection measures, reduce impacts on waterbodies (i.e. streams, bays and ocean) and prevent degradation.

***By protecting your Watershed,  
you are preserving your drinking  
water.***



Cape May County Website

<http://www.capemaycountygov.net>

New Jersey Department of  
Environmental Protection Website

<http://www.state.nj.us/dep>

U. S. Environmental Protection  
Agency Website

<http://www.epa.gov>

Cape May County Municipal Utilities  
Authority

<http://www.cmcua.com>



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Facts and Information  
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## A Few Facts ...

- Most of Cape May County and parts of Eastern Cumberland County form the 334 square mile drainage area known as the Cape May Watershed.
- There are 3 county parks located in the watershed totaling approximately 1568 acres.
- Ground water removal creates pressure imbalances, which in our area creates salt water intrusion. In Cape May City, this has forced the installation of a desalinization plant.
- The average annual rain fall in Cape May County is between 41 and 45 inches.
- Typically, each individual in an average household uses about 80 gallons of water per day.
- Construction of the Cape May Canal in the 1940's dewatered the shallow aquifers in the area and has affected well water levels.
- Each year approximately 5 billion gallons of freshwater is withdrawn from our aquifers and pumped into the ocean by our sewage treatment plants.
- Yard and food wastes typically make up 10-25% of the wastes going into landfills.
- Natural recycling of grass clippings after mowing (cut and leave it) provides up to 50% of the nitrogen needed by a lawn, thereby reducing the need for fertilizers.



- In 2000, the combined port of Cape May-Wildwood ranked fifth on the east coast in terms of commercial seafood landed (60 million pounds) and eighth in dollar value of catch (29 million dollars).
- 2,205 acres of active farmland and 842 acres of open space has been preserved through the Cape May County Open Space/Farmland Preservation Program. Many of these acres are located in critical aquifer recharge areas.
- There are 51 marinas providing 3,986 boat slips and 21 approved sewage pump out stations for Cape May boaters' use.
- The 2000 permanent population in Cape May County was 102,326. The summer population projection was 667,400.
- 1,404 building permits were issued in 2000, ranking Cape May County 11<sup>th</sup> in the state .
- 16% of land area in the County is under the jurisdiction of the Pinelands Comprehensive Management Plan and 83% under the Coastal Area Facilities Review Act (CAFRA).



## How can I help?

Managing stormwater in your own backyard is important. As an integral part of the Cape May Watershed, what you do in your backyard makes a difference. Here are some examples of what you can do at home:

- Reduce impervious surfaces by using pavers or bricks rather than concrete for a driveway or sidewalk.
- Divert rain from paved surfaces onto grass to permit gradual infiltration.
- Landscape with the environment in mind. Choose the appropriate plants, shrubs and trees for the soil in your yard; don't select plants that need a lot of watering (which increases surface runoff), fertilizers or pesticides.
- Maintain your car properly so that motor oil, brake linings, anti-freeze and other fluids don't contribute to water pollution.
- Keep stormwater clean. Never dump litter, motor oil, animal waste, or leaves into storm drains or catch basins.



In addition to the many things you can do as an individual, there are also ways that you can become involved at the community level. Cape May County is fortunate to have a large number of active Watershed Planning Project Participants who focus on water protection.

***For information on becoming involved, please call 609.465.1080.***